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POEM,

Four Years
PRONOUNCED AT NEW HAVEN,

BEFORE THE

SOCIETY OF PHI BETA KAPPA,

AUGUST 20, 1839.

BY GRENVILLE MELLEN.

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OUR YEARS.

I.

TELL me, ye tireless wanderers of all lands,
Whose feet, in far and ceaseless journeying,
Have press'd the thousand thresholds of the earth—
Great cities—peopled entrances to tombs!—
Ye men without a home! whose pilgrimage
Has been on mount and sea, from morning time
Of your bright days, until the cloudy years
Gather'd about your pathway, and made dim
What once seem'd radiant and beautiful—
Or, till, the circle of your journey done,
There seem'd no region waiting for your eye—
No soil untrodden by your sandal shoon—
Tell me, if in the climates ye have walk'd,
Beneath the frozen and the burning sun,
Link'd in the great procession, ye have seen
Aught pass, in its untold vicissitudes,
Bound with the blooming or decaying year,
That may hold measure with this deathless *mind*!
This thing intangible—yet felt, and seen,
As charter'd with some power beyond the stars,
That words may tell not—power whose lineage
Speaks of Infinity!—Have ye on tower,
The tallest that the earth has heav'd to cloud
That rests upon its pinnacle, seen aught
That can o'ertop the Intellect, or soar
Beyond the noble highway that it treads
On its great marches!—Have ye heard of men,
Whose mould was braver, [but who had not wings

To tell you of their country among spheres
 Whose hist'ry has no record mid the world—]
 Than is this image of your fellow, cast
 By HIM who fashion'd it, on every shore,
 To tell the story of a soul to all
 This lost and listening Nature!

Have ye heard

A larger lesson from the mount and sea,
 And banded music of the firmament,
 Than this which spirit to the spirit tells,
 When the head founts are stricken, and the stream
 Is swelling with the first Divinity
 That stirr'd creation's waters! Pass we—
 We who would hold a converse with our years—
 Into that chamber of our mystery,
 Whose portal is to all unbarr'd by Time.

II.

I am not what I was. I feel these years
 Have done sad office for me—and that Time,
 Which I had hop'd might fling around the path
 On which I ventur'd, something of that light
 That cheers life like a halo—has but cast
 A sickly shadow o'er my pilgrimage,
 And made thus far what I had dream'd might be
 A course for men to point at and admire,
 Only an upward strife of weariness—
 No struggle with dark Destiny—but toil,
 In which I've given no lesson to the world
 Of that high toleration which puts crown
 On Virtue in her trial; because here
 I've pour'd my spirit oft in dull complaint,
 That should have striv'n for mastery!—I see
 Through the pale vista of my memory,
 What once I was, compar'd with what I am!
 I was once buoyant—and my footstep rose

To something strong within me.—I gave voice,
 As in uplifting music, to high thoughts
 That spoke of a high nature—that should rise,
 So it were true to HIM who gave it helm,
 Onward—in mighty marchings, to the skies,
 Or, were it faithless, downward to the dust
 Our graves are made of!—I was certain, then,
 There was no power could lure my eye from Heaven—
 Or that a cloud upon the things of earth
 Could come—than midnight quicker—and more deep!
 But I have found my reason was a child,
 Without a master—a mere wanderer—
 Untaught—and leaving nothing—till my days
 Brought something that reprov'd me as it pass'd—
 A stern, rebuking spirit—whose dark wings,
 Heavy with sorrow, swept but slowly by,
 And held me in long shadow—like a night!

III.

'Tis not mine to forget. Yet can I not
 Remember what I would—or what were well!
 Mem'ry plays tyrant with me—by a wand
 I cannot master. I may not forget
 My visitations, that have shadow'd me
 Like an eclipse—until my tortur'd heart
 Was weaken'd like a child's—and like a child's
 Scarce knew its duty in its feebleness!
 Forgetfulness of sorrow is not mine—
 But on me rests remembrance like a ban—
 Yet, like the flash that plays upon the cloud,
 In the night-season, mem'ry will unveil,
 Though for a moment, some dim passages
 Of my pass'd, pall'd existence. I can see,
 As in a dream, how life was when I sprang
 Into its highway, for the agony
 And strain of high contention. I can see,

Beyond a vision's clearness, how I went,
 Cheer'd as the lark is, to the upper sky,
 By the unbarring morning—so by shouts
 Of men—as they broke round me, in *my* morn!
 Life was a panorama of high hope—
 A prospect of high travel—and great fame!

I saw upon the future painted naught
 That look'd like frowns upon repelling brows,
 But only hands that seem'd to beckon on,
 In a still, strange temptation, that my eye
 Grew mad with, till the colors of this Earth
 Took hue like those of Heaven—and I forgot
 It was the destiny of one to fade—
 And that my love was giv'n to!—But my years,
 Here, too, brought knowledge—in that company
 Of sadness and repentance, whose dim train
 Sweeps on so with experience, that they seem
 Like manacled and cowl'd captives, at the car
 Of some unmov'd and stayless conqueror!

* * * * *

And now how gaze I on that memory
 Of that first page I turn'd for lessons here!
 My prayer is to forget that dreamy past—
 And reckless of the present, to look on
 And upward, with a better constancy,
 And holier aspiration—till rebuke
 Is merg'd in mercy—and I feel that clouds
 Are bending to receive me, like great wings—
 To waft me to the mighty tabernacle
 That they are round about!—

IV.

O! could I feel
 That I within were so illuminate
 By some great revelation, as to speak

Unfailing as an oracle of mine
 And the throng'd spirits round me—and thus tell
 All that we ask for of both mysteries,
 This mingled and deep mystery of Life—
 And that still deeper one—the dream of Death—
 I were thrice blest, for then no longer mine
 Were this unending inquest of my soul,
 That tries my dull day like some weary voice,
 And racks my sleepless pillow ! What of Earth,
 To fill the measure of my happiness,
 May I ask more ? What tend I to—and where,
 When the great curtain falls, that shrouds us here,
 And I commence that spirit-pilgrimage
 To the untravel'd country, from whose bourne
 We come not back ! Why is the beautiful,
 Upon whose bloom I've ponder'd, till my eye,
 I fear'd me, was unfaithful—and sent sights
 Up to my cheated brain, that earth knew not,
 Destin'd so soon, and sadly too, to fade,
 And find that common brotherhood of dust .
 Which mantles all we cherish ! Why go down
 Into those silent chambers, whose dark walls
 Are made of blackness—and enclose the worm,
 In his long feast and festival, great hearts
 And noble, whose first glory was to ring,
 Amid those they made better, that fine peal
 Of virtuous joy that animates our years !

v.

But light is not within me. I but feel
 I want that radiance only God can give,
 And that desert is nothing. I but feel
 That I am chang'd—and that all earth is chang'd.
 I am a beggar for that better land—
 And in my poverty I feel that mine
 Has been the folly and perchance the crime,

That made me poor and penitent. That mine
 Has been the making of the madness all
 That first reduc'd, then kept my spirit down
 Among the faults and frailties of the earth—
 When, had it essay'd its angelic wings,
 And made the empyrean its high hope—
 And shot into the blue—and o'er the sky,
 In its far questioning—and ask'd for God,
 Where it but stoop'd with Man—it had awoke
 E'en in its morning, to a cloudless land
 And to a heavenly knowledge !—the deep things
 That bear no shadow in Eternity,
 But which, when toil'd for through the night of Time,
 By the soul grov'ling downward, ne'er unveil
 Aught of their brightness—but like those deep books,
 Told of by holy men, whose pages sleep,
 Seal'd in the heaven of heavens, remain in clouds
 Until the spirit passes the great bound
 That bars Man to Mortality—and lifts
 His brow, 'mid lights that fade not—and 'mid sounds
 Of that undying Music he has dreamt
 Before, but heard not—the great choruses
 Whose praise is everlasting !——

VI.

O! if mine
 Were to mount upward upon vasty wings,
 Like the strong eagle—and into the sun
 Sail with unflinching eye—if it were mine
 To walk forth on the winds, till every land
 Was spann'd by my quick knowledge—who should ask
 Where then my spirit center'd! But I bow
 In this weak poverty of power—I want
 The pinion to sway upward—the deep orb
 That knows not of extinguishment, 'mid lights
 That have no fading written on their brow—

But gathers a new radiance from the fount
 Of splendor that it opens on its march
 Into the furthest deep.—I yet would feel
 How much I have surrender'd of great gems,
 That make the undying treasury of the world,
 For the poor baubles that but gild a day,
 And lend a sorry lustre to an Earth,
 Whose diamonds press our coffins!—I would feel
 What lessons have been utter'd, as they pass'd,
 By pomp and funerals, on their gaudy way
 Unto their common boundary—the tomb!

VII.

I feel that change rides over, like a wheel
 Of some great victor-car above a world,
 The surface of all things that are unveil'd
 Before our rushing years!—They all bow down.
 Men change, and manners, dreams, and hopes, and fears—
 What yesterday was hope, to-day is fear—
 What then we pray'd for as the worshipper
 Prays at the shrine of his idolatry,
 We now adjure, as at his altar-place
 Does the exorcist, when he calls on powers
 Of all the elements to marshal him.
 A shadow gathers on the brow of Earth—
 Love turns to Hate—and Beauty to Decay.
 Woman, that was made for the glorious blue,
 To tread its golden floor—as they, whose wings
 Tell their fine genealogy—no more
 Sweeps round us like the angel that she was,
 Ere Sin lower'd o'er the garden of the World,
 And Man found out his weakness—and his grave!

VIII.

And why comes over me this night of clouds!
 Whence comes this wand and necromance of change!

And aye without renewal ! Why knows not
 This shadow a to-morrow—and a light
 Born of its darkness, like the morning rays
 That break on hues of Tartarus ? Why comes
 No youth upon our spirits, or our hearts,
 As it comes o'er all Nature and its flowers,
 To bring us back the glory we once thought
 Might easily be ours—if hopes and prayers
 Found aught responsive in the things of earth !
 I ask—but find no answer ! To deep prayer
 Comes but a deeper echo. Like no sound
 To satisfy, but sadden—as it swells
 From the deserted bosom which it fills—
 The echo of a spirit that has seen
 Death and Decay pass over it—and Change
 Write Night and Silence on its proudest things !
 The echo of a Heart that rose in pride,
 Like a strong Temple—and was bow'd—a Tomb !

IX.

Why is our Fate thus written ! Why is mine
 To hear this hollow murmur, that comes back
 No answer, still, but echo—as from grave
 That tells but of mortality—and gives
 Nothing of what it ask'd for !—Why is mine
 To see the past fade in a bitter smile,
 And frowns fall o'er the future—veiling it,
 As storms do pathways of the traveler,
 Making his noontide murkiest, oft, where morn
 Shone with the bravest promise. Why am I
 What I too well feel I am doom'd to be—
 The being of an Ordering, whose days
 Are saturate of change ! Why do I feel
 These shadowy intimations of a land,
 And of a life, that have no semblance here !
 Why do I pray this mystery of dreams-

May be unriddled, I once fear'd to meet
 On my lone pillow, as some Christless power!
 Why ask for Death—whose thought and lineament
 I fled from yesterday, as from that realm
 Whose mention is unholy!—and whose light
 Is but that lurid lustre, that warms not,
 But only terrifies the soul it veils!—

X.

Our passions are unruly. I have found
 My spirit warm'd within me, as new fires
 Kindle the central burning of the mount
 To a new flame, until the crater flares
 Up to the sky, 'neath which it rose before,
 Serene and silent! I am liker now
 To the volcano, than I was when life
 Stirr'd its young fires within me—and my hope
 Went hand in hand with Holiness. Yet naught
 Have I grown chary of my reverence
 For God and Virtue—but ambition now
 Marshals on lowlier paths—until I feel
 I've forfeited—at times—that heritage
 To which I was drawn upward in my morn!
 And now, to fall, and on my quivering knees
 Ask for reception back into the sky,
 From which I've turn'd thus madly, is the thought
 That racks me like a night-fiend!—

I would go

Into a dedication of myself
 To ONE whose service should have been to me,
 Through all these years I water'd with my tears,
 The earth I trod on—my reward and praise,
 And my exceeding glory. I would be,
 What now shall make this residue of days
 All that they were not—yet what I had dream'd
 They might be, though my spirit was unchang'd,

And my heart shackled by the bolts and chains
 Of an unholy nature.—I would be
 What men may point to, as some better thing
 Than can be shouted on to recompense
 For his best earthly trial—and therewith
 Bow in a pale content. Aye—something more
 Than can find in the strong voice of a world,
 The tempest-gale to waft him to his hope
 Over these troubled waters.—Something more
 Than can bow down before the shrine he spurn'd
 When he walk'd prayerfully—and his young heart
 Went on and upward—cheer'd alternately
 By homage it saw paid to Virtue, and
 The Faith it had in Heaven—ere there fell
 One bolt about the pathway, along which
 I breasted my young way, as if the skies
 Might be commanded, and its countless fires
 Kindle about me as I bade !—All this
 I would be, with the prayer and tear that pledge
 The heart's strong enterprise—in the lone watch
 Of the still night—when spirits are abroad,
 And stir us to great purposes.—All this
 I imprecate upon my pillow, till
 I feel how low the earth is, as it sweeps
 Through my pale vision—and how far the Heaven
 And all its immortalities, above
 My best imaginings, while this dull dust
 Clings to its martyr fame. I bury me
 In my wet pillow—and while yet I weep,
 I feel reclaim'd by sorrow—and would go
 Anew into the world—so I might there
 Walk as the creature of another—girt
 With Virtue as a crown—and in the robe
 Should mark me as of that great company
 Whose armor is eternal !

XI.

But we sleep!

How much of this our voyage to those pale spheres,
Is made up of our dreams!—How much of Life,
That shall find repetition in the sky,
If it be good and beautiful—or down,
Deeper than mines are, in a midnight realm,
If it be curs'd and black—is borne on wings
Whose swoop we hear not, and whose shadow falls
On the insensate only! O, how much
Treads to a music that our pillows know—
And only they—deeper than sound of sea,
When it comes upward from its fathomless
And great caves—where eternity seems shrin'd—
Or than the harmony of all the spheres!

But what then are our Dreams? What is the tale
And language that they utter? 'Tis the voice
And anthem of Immensity—pour'd out,
Deeper than all the voices of the seas,
Or the great empyrean, when the storms
Are trampling from their far home in the clouds,
And Nature has flung out her harmonies,
Waking through all like one vast instrument!
Voice of the night-watches! It is a voice
The things of earth but imitate—a sound
That only angels choir—when from the stars
They stoop above the worlds that under them
Roll their large journey, with undying eyes—
To light them onward—as white messengers!

XII.

Again, how *little* of this dream we sing
Is on our pillows! We go forth to Life,
And half the round we walk is but a dream!

The Joy that makes a laughter of our days,
 When scarce the cradle's rocking has pass'd by,
 And left our brain to boyhood, is a dream !
 The Beauty that makes Youth so beautiful,
 And so impassionates our bounding years,
 Sending the quick blood from the fountain heart
 Through all the streams that center in that home,
 Is but a vision—and the angel she
 That gives it glory, and that golden light
 Which lace the clouds that waft us, what is she,
 But one made like us—veil'd by her white wings !
 The Love that lifts us, till we feel all flowers
 Is the dim earth we walk—and all perfume
 The very air that poisons us—the winds
 That make us pale, and sicken—till the bowers
 We built for those we worship, become graves
 For them and us—what is it but a Dream,
 Swifter than wings, or clouds which water them,
 As they ride down the mist !

XIII.

The eagle bird
 That walks the mighty pathway of those clouds,
 Treads to a loftier music than is ours,
 E'en when we move to that which marshals us
 In Life's great mountain passes !—the highways
 Throng'd by the crown'd and strong. The music there,
 To the bold bird, is as from mightier spheres,
 Beyond poor Earth's attraction ! He mounts up,
 And hears the everlasting anthem, as it pours
 From trumps that lose not their brave harmony
 As he goes onward—but which gathers song,
 The deeper he makes wake into the blue !
 No dream is on his pinion as he flies—
 He hears its swoop and rustling as he mounts,
 And lights his diamond eye with a new blaze

As swells his tireless journey. But on Man
 How soon a palsy settles like a night,
 Bowing his sturdiest wing! It is not Love,
 Beauty—nor Youth—Ambition—Glory—Fame—
 Can keep it to its motion. It will down,
 As if some power in Earth's central grave
 Drew to some destination of Decay
 That knew not of resistance or appeal!

XIV.

'Tis all a dream!—We gather to the course
 Where man starts forth for triumph—or his tomb!
 We spring into the tussle—and the sweat
 Of base contention bathes us like a rain;
 Our hair grows lank and heavy with the wet,
 And our blood hot and hasty. We hear sounds
 From broad-mouth'd trumpets in great jubilee,
 And voices that shout "onward!"—There's a roar,
 Sterner than that which tramples from the sea,
 That swells with victory. There are canopies
 Of banners that uplift us, as the pens
 Of an archangel! And the ocean call
 Of multitude to multitude is in our ear
 Like a command. We hear it go, as oft
 We hear the giant thunder, as it bounds
 From peak to parapet of the great hills—
 List'ning with half shut lips, and frighten'd face,
 Pallid at revelations so undreamt
 And unimagin'd. We hear men proclaim
 Our spirits worthy of all earth can give—
 Forms fashion'd for the robes of royalty—
 Our hands made for the sceptre—and our brows
 Pil'd for those crowns that radiate with light
 Men worship more than Virtue. We believe.
 We bow—and question nothing. But we frown
 On him that pales at these strong trumpeting,

And thinks 'Truth merg'd in Adulation! O!
 How valueless seems Friendship, when the voice
 Of Flattery is round us!—Now, like sound
 Of low wind heard at midnight—when the world
 Seems list'ning to its Music—so unstirr'd
 Are sea—and mount—and city! Now, like voice
 Of that wind when it heralds the strong storm,
 And shouts in dark delight, as on its path
 It leads the cloud and tempest! Ah! how mean—
 How far these voices! heeded not, nor heard
 Beside a throng'd world's shouting—surging on,
 And drowning in the uproar of its roll
 Sounds that might save us, were our ears unbarr'd
 To melodies of Heaven! As those lone streams
 That in their mellow cadences might soothe
 Th' unquiet spirit of the wanderer,
 Seeking beside still waters for the rest
 He finds not 'mid the currents of the world,
 Are heard not, near the great Niagaras
 That thunder and leap by them! They are lost
 In the fierce torrent that defies all arms
 But the Almighty one that fashion'd it,
 To stay its monarch footsteps.

XV.

But my Years
 As they were in my childhood! Ah! 'tis there
 My spirit centers with a constancy
 That shames all other—and a memory
 That may not be forgotten!—My green years!
 When all I trod on seem'd a bed of bloom,
 And all that wav'd around me seem'd but flowers
 Broad as the shadowy trees—all gathering
 And giving odor. When the cricket's cry
 Came to my early pillow like a song,
 Cheering and lulling childhood. When my dreams

Were all a part of that low harmony
 Love pours about the couch o'er which it prays
 In whispers and in tears!—When I laid down
 And woke in gratitude! to leap with life
 And joy both ringing round my glancing feet
 And echoing in my young laughter. When
 My questionings were only about things
 Whose magnitude and beauty I beheld,
 With wonder—as I now behold the world,
 And nothing about Man!—When I look'd on
 His handiwork, that was but vanity,
 And ask'd a child's vain questions at the knees
 Of those that are his oracles.—When all
 I would unriddle was why graves were made—
 Not where we tended!—and philosophy
 That dealt but with the earthiest things of earth,
 Seem'd most consummate to my childlike soul!
 Years when I saunter'd lazily to school—
 With laden satchel, but an empty brain—
 And that low, meaningless music that I troll'd
 By city walk, or by the cool green lane
 Where old trees rustled, and the swooping bird
 Told of a noble freedom 'mid the hills,
 Was music still that carried in its hum
 All that I thought was happiness!—And now,
 How faithless feels my spirit as I call
 Those spectres of the past out of the clouds,
 The far-off clouds that are their sepulchres,
 And see upon their brows, as on some scroll
 Each bore and held before me—“We were once
 No phantoms, but embodyings of all
 You knew or dreamt of—all you thought was well
 To know or care for, as with careless foot
 You trod the morning pathway of your days,
 And call'd us your companions!”—I cannot
 Believe, as I gaze backwards, that I trod

Heedless, and thus uncar'd for, the green earth,
 And its rose-tangled avenues, that led
 Up to the noisy highways of the world,
 Where flowers wave never in the multitude,
 But far between—and crush'd in the perfume—
 Content—and seeking nothing—but that Joy
 Might lift my pulse forever as it did,
 When first I knew the mercy!—and that still
 I might undying home's blest music find,
 And like to-day, to-morrow!—I cannot—
 I cannot, if I would, believe that I
 Am *now* but a reflection of the *past*—
 Enlarg'd and lengthen'd—though not perfect made
 In that but sick development which Time
 Gives to the thing it destines to decay—
 And o'er which 'twill laugh loudly, when it cries
 “Down to the dust you trampled on when pride
 Sat at the helm of the bold ship you launch'd
 On the great waters.—Down to hated earth—
 And mingle with it, ye that thought your feet
 Contaminate, if once they touch'd a grave,
 In this dim passage through which graves and worms
 Make half the ground beneath them!”—

Time and Years!

The only formers 'neath the hand of God,
 Of all that can take form! The only lords
 Who go triumphant from the life of things
 Up to their consummation!—giving all—
 Commanding all—all-taking! The strong powers
 That rule the crown and cottage—giving each
 Their glory or repose!—Withouten whom
 Naught can go on to blooming, or become
 The thing it would be, or the light it may.
 Without whom nothing of the garniture
 Humanity puts on—the high appendages
 Of a high nature—nothing of the Man

Could be led out, and onward to the world
 He may adorn or darken !—without whom,
 Man would be nothing from the womb to earth,
 Where he must wait for judgment.—Time and Years !
 Now comes the mystery that wearies me !
 These are the crown'd ones, that with frightful sway
 Point towers to dust, and urge us to the cells
 We must inhabit in it, spite the prayers,
 And tears, and imprecations of a world !
 Down to the chaos which they led from, now
 They send us back like tyrants, dungeon-deep—
 Unknowing what appeal is—or the cry
 Of Hope, that has been cheated as it rose,
 Of all it deem'd its heritage. Down !—down !
 Rings o'er a race—and powers that herald them
 To earth and what it tells of, scoff them down
 To coffins and the clay men moulder in !—

XVI.

It is not what we are, as what our Years
 May destine to, that tries us.—I look out,
 When birds have folded wing, and man has gone
 To sleep and silence, and I see the skies
 Are eloquent with stars. I think I hear
 That great unceasing music that has roll'd
 From sphere and space—the tribute they have given
 To God, since he commanded light to break,
 And worlds to herald it. I behold—and tears
 Drown my fix'd eyes—for I cannot but weep
 At this immensity, which so defies
 All that our lean philosophy would probe,
 Or dare look into. I see world on world
 In silent, but eternal revolution—new,
 As when earth sprang to ether, and began
 The circle of its wonder—and its praise !
 There is no change *there*. But *I* feel the change

Most palpable upon me. And the trump
 Within me rings of it!—and this it is
 That tries me when I see man bow'd to dust
 By generations, while these stars and suns
 March changeless—cloudless—and unknown to years,
 On their illimitable journey!—Man!
 Yet he can gaze, unquestion'd by himself,
 On what himself is type of—save in life
 And limitation of that energy,
 Which, as we dream, defiance gives to Time,
 But which *will* grovel to the conqueror
 Above our ashes, when our spirits long
 Shall have pass'd wand'ers to the elements!

XVII.

How much there is of promise in our Hope—
 How little in our Life!—Youth is our Hope.
 It bears its lineaments of loveliness,
 As when they are most bright. Its heraldry
 Is blazon'd as strong crest is on some shield
 It looks to as protection—and its pride!
 It fashions worlds as countless as the stars—
 And with a strange ubiquity, treads all,
 And all inhabits—till breaks in the dream,
 And crush the gilded bubbles!—promises!
 They are the princes of our trusting years—
 That whisper to our faith in cadences
 Whose music we withstand not.—But the *deed*!
 There comes the sorrow of that royalty!—
 And Hope's forgotten—as men are, with kings!

* * * * *

How weak are we! how wise the architect
 Of the entangled system, that yet seems
 Like some vast web to our pale infancy,
 To whose beginning we cannot look back—
 Whose end we must despair of!—We are dark.

And not to us a new apocalypse
 Can give that revelation which the sky
 Alone shall open when we're pass'd the bourne !

XVIII.

I have no mem'ry when my spirit first
 Caught its perceptions of the mount and cloud,
 And the great waters—and the tempest roar
 That wakes them to their lashing ; when my eye
 First saw that fearful lustre in the air
 Which Nature robes in, in her poetry ;
 And my ear heard that harmony that treads
 In a victorious music through the world,
 In voices of broad cities—and the storm !
 I cannot now remember when I woke
 To my first wonder. But 'tis in my heart
 As something I seem'd born to—that no power
 Of earth—and no fatality, could crown
 This human in me with, and the great calls
 That were on all sides waking from a sphere
 That I was new to. But 'twas on me then.
 'Twas nature—though a mystery ! She rais'd
 Her veil from the tall mountains, and the sea—
 She stood like sudden sculpture before one
 Who has dreamt long of Beauty—and I saw
 What I had pray'd to see—the perfect form
 Of chisel'd loveliness—and heard what oft
 In the night time I'd heard, as chants from clouds,
 Yet could repeat not.—It was with me then.
 I saw and heard of glories in the scenes
 That nature now reveal'd, which I had dream'd—
 But song's great masters had beheld unscath'd—
 And my blood bounded as I felt to me
 This story of immensity was told,
 In language whose sublimity was bas'd
 On things so bravely utter'd ! My heart sang

As though a choir were in me, echoing
 The everlasting harmonies that went
 Up from the ceaseless lips of a vast world !
 It sang as though responsive to the deep
 And far-voic'd anthems of the elements,
 When they are summon'd to their boldest praise !
 I found my glory was to list the tale
 Told by tumultuous tongue from night and cloud—
 Or from the shouting crag, and swooping wind.
 Oft to the quiv'ring house-top of my home,
 As to lone tower, when shadow had come down
 Like a wide wing along the glooming air,
 Oft did I steal—a sky-enchanted boy,
 To gaze upon the dull and leaden brow
 Of the uplifting tempest—gathering
 Along the mountain-land—in pillar'd clouds !
 Beautiful in their deep blackness—beautiful
 In their intensity—as trampling bands
 In their gigantic march—like things of life—
 Till I forgot they were the heraldry
 Of the embattled storm—and to the mist
 Shouted in concert ! as if voice of mine
 Were heard or heeded 'mid the bustling pomp
 Of that colossal van !

With pallid brow
 Lean'd on my hot hand, shivering with delight,
 And eye that I felt kindling as it gaz'd,
 I star'd into the clouds—unfaltering,
 E'en when the white bolt through the rifted mass
 Dropp'd to the frightened earth !—and mutt'ring far
 Came the hoarse thunder—like the wakening leap
 Of long imprison'd waters ; then, more near,
 Its crash, as of ten thousand trumpets, blown
 Above an earthquake—or a nation's wail !
 I listen'd, and I wonder'd, 'mid the boom
 Of these great voices—till, like lions, driven

Into the forest where they rang'd and roar'd,
 They sank in mad exhaustion—and I heard
 Their billowy base within the sinking cloud—
 And felt there was no music like that call
 Of tempest unto tempest—as it died !

XIX.

'Twas now I felt my new companionship
 With a new Nature—and with Nature's God.
 I trod among the pinnacles of earth—
 And question'd the tall mountains. I could see
 The power with which they all were eloquent,
 And hear it as it spake from its white towers
 Of crag and avalanche—in awful voice !
 With tongue that never to my unseal'd ear
 Before had echoed. I could hear a sound
 From the far-off horizon of my land,
 Sent from these strong-bas'd ramparts to the sky
 Full both of history and praise !—It rose
 As clarion call might of the trumpeter
 From city's crowning spire—the citadel
 That lifts its pennon, and proclaims its pride !

XX.

This was the poetry that haunted me
 Like some fierce splendor, that so fills the eye
 That dark turns light with it—and night at last
 Is lost in lustre ! 'Twas a poetry
 That rose from vale and cliff—and wood—and rock—
 Mingling their wide thanksgiving—and each strong
 In the fine chorus that it woke and swell'd !

XXI.

But the unbounded Ocean ! O, 'twas there
 My spirit wander'd with its freest range
 While yet I was but childlike—and my veins

Felt but a boyish gladness, as they rose
 Without the pulse of worship that was soon
 To give devotion beauty and a soul.
 I walk'd the ocean shore. I ran—I leapt—
 I smote my hands in ecstasy—and call'd
 Unto the billows with a madd'ning scream,
 That the foam laugh'd at—and lash'd rocks
 On which it broke sent back no echo there,
 To my faint voice, where thunder was the song
 They sounded to for ages!

I went out

With those I reverenc'd, upon the sands,
 When calm was on the waters—and their tune
 Was like a sea-shell's murmuring in the ear,
 In its low undulations. And I ask'd
 What kept this within bounds—and where it fell—
 Into what caverns—as it backward went,
 Like the retreating legions of some king,
 Whose will was a command? I ask'd again,
 By what great marvel Man could dare to mount,
 And ride upon this element, that seem'd
 Continually to reach, as if in rage
 For something it had not—and in retreat
 Moan'd as for some lost victory?

As Years

Pass'd over me, new thoughts pass'd in. I saw
 With a new adoration, all that rose
 Upon my boyhood's vision—and gaz'd out
 On the triumphant sea, in sun and storm,
 With joy that was a terror! I gaz'd out
 To see it with a faith, yet with a fear
 I could not tell of, for I had no words
 To whisper of such work! Yet was there praise
 Deep as that ocean-sea, within my heart,
 Though silence was its utterance! and yet
 Time brought no sameness here. But as I gaz'd

From my lone chamber to the sinking verge
 Where sky shut down, and all horizon blent
 With the blue waters, I grew deeper still
 In my inquiry and my wondering.
 There was magnificence—the beautiful
 Leagu'd with the boundless in this spreading sea,
 That mock'd my tireless still, but tension'd eye.
 I gaz'd—and gaz'd—until my wilder'd sight
 Grew into reverie—but I felt not
 That there could ever come a weariness
 Where such eternal grandeur, like a voice,
 Appeal'd to my idolatry !———I dream'd
 That there were bright foundations of the sea—
 Great doors of palaces—and diamond caves,
 And pathways crusted with the heraldry
 Of Nature in her royalty ?—I saw
 How beautiful it was for mighty hearts—
 Fine spirits, that lov'd Virtue and their Land,
 To find such shroud in this mortality
 As that which mantled them amid the gems
 Of this great billowy kingdom ! I look'd down
 As into one throng'd cemetery—where
 Corruption touch'd not the still company—
 But from the midst of undulating hair
 Shone brows of alabaster—and dull eyes,
 Waiting as they had lain for centuries,
 For the strong trumpet of the conqueror !

XXII.

Then with another gladness I sprang forth,
 To mount these reinless coursers of a world,
 As one does to the freedom of the hills
 From the crush'd city. And I felt how broad
 And how triumphant was the liberty
 They told of as they flew ! How full the note
 They sounded in their ever-during bass

Into the ear of Nature.—In the storm
 An unknown music rose from ringing shroud,
 And shriek of the high mariner, amid
 The shatter'd sail that banded the bent mast—
 And from the flashing deck, where fiery foam
 Danc'd to the howling winds. In the night time
 I felt exultance could I grapple close
 With the strong cordage, and look palely down
 Into the boiling chaos of the waves
 And the mad mist, that from the plunging prow
 Leapt to the air like arms!—I felt that Man
 Was more the pastime of the elements,
 Amid this hallelujah of the deep,
 Yet less a creature than he was on earth!
 And that his strength upon the mountain sea
 Was but a baby's weakness—though his mind
 Shone like a Pharos 'mid the thundering noise
 And tumbling of the main he walk'd in power!
 How wonderful did science in the helm
 And compass tell his mastery! How strong
 Speak in the signal cannon, whose round roar
 Burst through the combing sea! How beautiful
 Tell in the meteor flag a history
 Pages might not make record of for Man!

XXIII.

'Twas on this strong deck of the leaping bark,
 When winds were rising on the volum'd cloud,
 And moonbeams struggled with the murky night,
 I first grew conscious of the monarch power
 And poetry of Ocean!—I first saw
 Those footsteps of a mystery which there
 Walk'd the dim chambers, that I knew not of
 Before this great unveiling.—I beheld
 In the white surge that seem'd another Alp,
 Call'd from its grave of waters—and the spout

Springing like some old pillar to the sky,
 The cloudy column of some stricken fane—
 Stern proclamation of a royalty
 That held no question with these things of graves!
 'Twas here I first held converse with a voice
 That first within me like a master spake,
 Calling to great imaginings—a voice
 That sang of Nature crown'd with majesty,
 Equal'd but by its Goodness. Of a hand
 That knew no guidance but a loftier Will
 Than marshal'd things of mortals. It was mine
 To learn that lesson first in this vast school,
 That did rebuke and cheer me—while it came
 In language naught on earth can imitate—
 Sublime as Heaven—yet boundless as sublime.

XXIV.

I seem now to remember that I found
 A spell I had been stranger to, when borne
 On the bold breakers, amid night and storm!
 Something there mov'd upon the wells within—
 Those head founts, often stirless till we die—
 And woke them into motion deeper down
 Than I had dream'd a life was. I look'd up
 To holier elevations—and beheld
 With new confession, and a clearer eye,
 The power beyond the veil. I pray'd. I wept.
 But with a joy and thankfulness that mine
 Was this gift that inspir'd to finer themes
 And woke to better hopes. My solitude
 Heard of my tribute, and the Holiness
 To which it rose in silence, from that hour
 Return'd a rich reward—like blessed dew
 On flowers that breathe their praise!—For as I felt
 Those stronger aspirations break within,
 In broader song, and nobler sympathies,

In deeps before unsounded, I was proud,
 Yet bent in all my pride, in thankfulness,
 That God had given his glories to be seen
 And felt by my poor spirit, amid scenes
 Touch'd with his fierce sublimities, and loud
 With all the bravest music of the world !

XXV.

A change was now upon me. And it came
 With that strange mingling of divinity
 That marks our holiest stirrings. I've not words
 To tell how like it was to things above,
 As I have imag'd them—how like to thoughts
 That pay our virtues by their visitings !
 It was a change of dreams and promises
 I had not dreamt before—though shapes had walk'd
 Beside me cast like angels—and with tones
 Like those that angels whisper. I now saw
 And felt that I was summon'd to a sight
 And sound that had been visions !—But they pass'd.

XXVI.

There was one with me in these changeful days,
 Whose step kept even music with my own.
 And he was of my spirit. I could see
 Something responsive there—and something oft
 Which, though it found no answer in my life,
 Yet found it in my heart. And I could feel,
 As by a revelation, that his years
 Still pictur'd but my own, as they had pass'd
 This morning of their mystery.—We leapt
 The gray hills and the crags in brotherhood
 Of feeling and of passion. We went out
 To listen by the sea to tales we thought
 None others could tell thus—until there grew
 Companionship and oneness that no words

Can give the shape to which such mingling gave.
 I call'd him brother. We were swept like harps
 Of the same tension, by the same glad breeze
 To give like swell and cadence. He was one
 Whose Hope was like his eye—intent on Heaven!
 And oft he told me of that blessed sphere,
 And warn'd me from the angel things of earth,
 Or what seem'd angels, with such sorrowing tongue
 I seem'd but listening to an eloquence
 Whose home was of that country which it sang!

XXVII.

One summer day
 When silence brooded on the sweltering sand,
 And a scarce visible breathing curl'd the sea,
 Along the stern of our light bark we lay,
 Cast in the shadow of its flapping sail—
 Drifting in aimless luxury among
 Green rocks and island waters.—He was touch'd
 With a rare paleness—and his marble face
 Was haggard for his years—for he was young—
 But Time had temper'd his unseason'd blood,
 And ic'd it at its home.—He had dream'd dreams,
 And met them as realities—until
 Lines, that were histories, fell on his cheek,
 And his hair whitened like an anchorite's.

“I tell you that my voice is like to one
 That passes from an oracle. I see hands
 Lifted in imprecation—and hear tones
 That are like dirges from a far-off land,
 And pregnant with the past. O! if you see,
 Friend of my early days! upon my brow
 That written, I would tell you—blasted hope—
 A tempest-morning, and the temple scath'd
 Where I had thought glory would light the shrine—

If you can read in the soul's vestibule
 The warning of the eye—then read a tale
 That tells you of the Heaven and Hell of Love !”

XXVIII.

He spake as one whose service at the shrine
 Of his pale priesthood had been link'd with all
 Of Life that he held golden. As he ceas'd,
 A flush went o'er the winter of his brow,
 And his convulsive hand fell upon mine
 As if in struggle. I look'd up. A cloud
 Was sailing up the sky—and the far trees
 Shook to the gathering winds along the isles
 They darken'd and embower'd. With asking eye
 I bade him to the riddle that mov'd him
 As some stern memory—and that startled him
 From silence even to outcry.—He flung back,
 And gaz'd up at the mast, and pennon flag,
 And then upon the waters, along which
 Our boat now sprang in gladness—while the sail
 Roll'd to the ringing gale. And thus he spake.

XXIX.

“I sleep—but 'tis to dream—though I have pray'd
 For that blest spirit of forgetfulness,
 Which comes o'er virtue like a necromance,
 Leaving an infant quiet with the heart,
 And with the Mind oblivion. But my prayer
 Has found no entrance at the gate of God—
 And I dream on. Rest has no change for me,
 And comes not to me with its angel wings,
 Fanning and shadowing, till a dreamy world
 Takes form of what it should be—and we think
 Life yet might be a Vision crown'd with gold,
 And even yet a weary thing to die !
 There is no midnight to me. The long bell

That tells that passage of "recorded time"
 To the insensate watcher, bears to me
 No story of the Future, or the Past—
 But the dull night-chime falls upon my ear,
 As upon Marble—or some sculptur'd thing,
 That rings to, but feels not, the booming sound.
 I know no measure of my days. My mind
 Gives with its silent but unerring voice
 No intimation of that wondrous change,
 That with alternate radiance and gloom
 Walks the great earth and sky—Morn with its bars
 Opening like Mercy on a waking world,
 And Night, with its vast music of the stars.
 I gaze upon the bright machinery
 That circulates through space—and as I gaze,
 And listen to the tireless melodies
 That well upon us in a choiring sound,
 As from some mighty fountains in the sky,
 I feel their golden order as they pass,
 And hear their Master's voice. Mount, cloud, and sea,
 Lift up their majesty—and a strong shout
 Leaps from grey crag to the blue waters. All
 Swell the fierce thunder-peal in deep response,
 And tell their glorious history in the storm!

XXX.

I know not years—yet have I liv'd long years,
 And known deep sorrow; and if beam of Joy
 Have gleam'd across my pathway as I trod
 The valley of my pilgrimage, it seem'd
 As if in mockery—and the lustre fell
 Upon my spirit's front, like the cold light
 Upon the ice mounts of the shining north.
 No radiance has been mine that lit the heart,
 But that which play'd upon its summit—all
 Without or warmth or glory. I have liv'd,

When Life was but a pastime—and the beat
 Of the quick pulse was like no motion else
 That measures what it governs—but a rush
 Of the ungovern'd waters—that spring forth
 And pass to sea in tumult. On that wave
 Rode the bright spirit of Joy—and every swell
 Of the glad billow lifted, while it bore
 A soul of joyousness; but sweeping down
 The pathway of sad change, the skies were chang'd,
 And the deep light departed.—It was thus,
 Without a heeded measure of my days
 They pass'd to the great Ocean. I beheld
 No value to them. Like a pendulum
 They swung their weary duty—pattering
 The story of Time's passage—and to-day
 Telling the tale of yesterday—till years
 Pass'd in this nothingness, and I beheld
 Their history on my brow. I heard afar
 Like the old roaring of the ceaseless sea,
 A sound come o'er my ear when I recall'd
 The mem'ry of young Joy—the beautiful—
 The many-voic'd, and holy. I trode back
 The path where I had leapt when pulse was strong,
 And every cadence music—when the sky
 Was but a habitation of bright hearts,
 That beat to melody—and gave the world
 A lustre and a loveliness that none
 Could reason into being—though they dream'd,
 Led by the best philosophy—a light
 That the soul gather'd from simplicity,
 And gaz'd on through this dome of all the stars!
 And ask you whence this magic on my life,
 That crush'd me like a conqueror—and pal'd
 Lip, cheek, and brow, as though the seal of Death
 Had stamp'd its triumph on them?—It was Love—
 Woman, and Beauty! All sat thron'd in light

In one imperial creature—and 'twas mine
 To stand before her footstool—wonder-bow'd
 In madness of idolatry. She was made
 To win and hold the Spirit like a song
 Of blessed spheres, and breathing of its home.
 There was no questioning her sway—it bore
 The heart it hung o'er, like the element,
 All mystery and all power, that lifts a world
 Up to the Heaven which spans it.

'Mid this hope,
 This triumph-flush that flash'd along my brain,
 While yet into the fountains of that love—
 The great deep of her eyes, I look'd as one
 Upon some shrine while dying—she was chang'd!
 And taken to the skies! Her loveliness
 Pass'd to the sphere it might illuminate—
 And darkness fell around me.—

A cold grave
 Now garner'd all my jewels—and eclipse
 Fell on my spirit—shadowing its disk,
 Until the night seem'd total! Tears fell not—
 The founts were dried in the hot agony
 That scath'd my stricken soul—and my sunk eyes
 Peer'd with a marble hardness on the world
 That had prov'd false and faded."

XXXI.

He was still.
 It was now night—and crag, and cloud, and star,
 Found echo in the sea.—Our lazy sail
 Swung from the creaking mast—and under us
 Our inconstant faces dallied with the moon.
 He spake as though his struggle had been done,
 For years while he was battling. As though now
 'Twas over with him, while for rivalry
 Great passions held stern warfare in his heart,

And sear'd and sack'd the land ! It was for him
 Until all time should darken, to point spear,
 And go with helm and breastplate to the war
 In which he'd won good knighthood—though in tears !

XXXII.

And how on me sat this pale history !
 Did I hear aught like voices in the night,
 Coming and going like warnings ! There were sounds
 That charm'd but could not teach me. I heard not
 In all that tale, to whose intensity
 Wet brow and locks gave witness, one record
 Would lure me back to solitude. I grew strong
 As I heard others' weakness. I grew firm
 To be a victim on the altar-place,
 After the last devotion. And while yet
 I felt I might pass with him to the death,
 Through any noble martyrdom, I breath'd
 A whisper'd word over his streaming brow,
 As our oars cut the shadow of the cliffs.
 "Friend of my spirit—dream not 'tis set down
 In the eternal Book, that Peace, like wing
 Shall hang above the waters of thy life,
 Making their passage hidden. It is writ
 That strife shall mark thy pilgrimage—and though
 Thou think'st the warfare ended, it knows not
 An end but with the silence of the pulse
 In hearts that leap like thine !"

Nor did it come,
 Until the train swept to his lowly home,
 And he with the forgetful had lain down
 The burden he had taken for the skies !

XXXIII.

I sat beside his pillow at that time,
 When he was chang'd. I saw that he had read

On all he could peruse in those dim days—
 The summons for his better pilgrimage,
 And the new armor of that robe-array
 In which he should pass upward. I saw not
 That he was paler, as the unsteady lamp
 Play'd on his sharpen'd face, than when he lay
 Under that moonlight sail, where he foretold
 This sadden'd final of his stricken life.
 One hand was laid in mine—and on his brow
 His other in uncertain weakness stray'd,
 And his wet hair wept over it. He drew
 My arm in silence to his beating side,
 As in those days of young-voic'd confidence
 When with one eye and heart we went afiel'd.
 He gaz'd into my face. 'Twas the still gaze
 Of one on whom new scenes are lifting—one
 Who sees beyond this mining to a realm
 Where Virtue grasps reward surpassing gold.

XXXIV.

I sat beside his pillow—a few friends
 Travers'd the room with stealthy steps and slow,
 Looking askance, and sometimes through their tears.
 He beckon'd to be rais'd against the wall,
 Then bent us round him with a prophet's look,
 And told of that to come. 'Twas terrible—
 Yet holier than all pageantry of earth—
 And as he caught a strength from angels round,
 And e'en grew eloquent in dying, all
 Gave but new glory to his lumin'd mind,
 And joy unto his visage.—

We drew round—

And thus he breath'd in tones that seem'd a song.
 "I feel my spirit passing. The pale air
 Looks cold and sunless—and dim forms are round
 My beating and hot head. They look like clouds,

So faintly are they trac'd—yet with the shapes
 Of men who once walk'd with me on the earth.
 My ears are dull—and yet a voice I hear,
 From these white gibbering people, that come round
 My wet and weary pillow. Yes—I *know*
 That I am passing. I had *dreamt*, before,
 How this might be—*must* be—but not till now
 This terrible experience was mine
 That tells us dreams are true!—A strange light,
 Colder than twilight mantles up my eye,
 And ominous birds are glancing down the sky,
 With quick and dusky pinions—the grey bat
 Is wheeling over me—and all the earth
 Is fading—fading! 'Twill be night indeed!
 For all these habitable things, to me,
 Soon as the veil is dropp'd, will pass away
 And be as those that are not. One great grave
 Will gather over them—and silence brood
 As corpses in old sepulchres—until
 The thrilling trumpet-blast shall scare the dead
 And call the world to judgment.

Yet think not

My spirit cowers at these stern prophecies,
 That speak thus of my summons. I heed all.
 I'm ready. And if not with Cæsar's pride
 I hug my tottering body in a robe,
 And fall as kings do—I can yet enwrap
 Myself in garments nobler than the earth's,
 And pass in Hope's bright raiment to the clouds!
 I feel strong in my great weakness. Earth
 Takes nothing from the armament within
 With which Faith girds us like a fortress. Here
 The soul sits in its Kremlin, while the sound
 And sight of human conflict dull and swim
 On the pall'd vision. It but seems to grasp
 With a renew'd retention all that Hope
 Paints brighter as we fail!

Nay—nay—weep not!
 Tears are no consolation. I must go—
 They cannot hold me back. The fiat's pass'd—
 And Death inexorable. He knows not tears!
 But prayer He cowers at—and to Hope He pales.
 For they are 'yond His empire! O, weep not—
 Save for yourselves, while to the beck of Time
 Ye give that heed ye madly do deny
 Unto the deep Eternity! Weep not.
 Or only for yourselves—for I can see
 What ye cannot, that in your pilgrimage
 Demands a sigh and sobbing. We have been
 Sad in our duties and our offices—
 Not won reward—or claim to that regard
 Which reckless offspring tortures from the heart
 It has but wrung and broken. O! but hear
 A warning that is prayer. But turn within
 To the last eloquence whose awful tones
 Are voic'd like thunder from the arching skies—
 Far inward—and that naught of Earth can still!"

XXXV.

His words died—and *he* died!—Is it for man
 To boast of his to-morrows—and his years
 Seem but to-morrows, when his fiercer sun
 Has mounted higher—and a quicker wheel
 Bears his loud chariot onward! Is it his
 To be prophetic from the rosy past,
 And sing of flowers and summers—as if all
 Should be a halo round him, till the cloud
 That is a night, thickens about his way,
 And his thin hands grope white and fearfully
 Adown the valley!—I had seen the past
 Telling me golden story—and I thought
 The present was not faithful to the past—
 And something dimm'd the future.—Yet I walk'd

As one whose path bore roses—and whose feet
Were tangled in the beauty of the bloom !

XXXVI.

Now I hear better lessons in the cry
Of raven and the cricket, when the night
Is stooping with the storm about my door,
Than I have ever thought was borne from bards
'Neath fretted roof—from flashing instrument—
Though holy was the music that they pour'd
Of anthem and loud praises ! For the cry
Of the night-bird and insect seem to bear
Something of supplication in the tone,
That breaks from thankfulness—and I believe
They feel there is compassion over them
That wakes their passing harmony—and tunes
Their story and rebuke !——Yet it is not
This language that is nobler than the song
Of Man, when he ascribes it 'bove the stars,
And not to base things of the earth, his feet
Stumble amid and trample.—It is not
That any other brow can lift with Man's,
When it is warm and radiant with the fire
Of his great nature—or a voice go up
Into the Courts of God, like that of him
He has put helm and crown on—so it rise
In strains that angels harbinger unsham'd
Into the dome they bow in and adore !
Let him but lift the spirit with his song,
And move his lips in hallow'd minstrelsy,
Then will no sound of earth pour on his ear
The lesson he now gathers from its cries.

XXXVII.

Now seem'd the roundure of my days. I trod
By mountain-side or market-place alike,

The creature not of silence, or of tears—
 But one who felt the circle of his life
 Fashion'd and finish'd—and the register
 Set in th' eternal books by the white hand
 Of the accounting angel.—I went forth
 As though a new beginner among men,
 With whom I'd gone thus far into the West
 And setting of my time.—Yet I was not
 As one the world calls stranger. I had bow'd,
 But felt my being better while rebuk'd.
 I saw another Nature casting off
 The weaker first habiliments, that wrapp'd
 My spirit in its morning. I beheld
 What it *could* mount to—and the destiny
 Which it *would* claim, as of the heritage
 Told by our fathers, who had seen the sky.

XXXVIII.

Thus has the spirit, which, before that sky
 Was open'd to me in these visitings,
 Would have pass'd onward with the lesser things
 Of earth, now pass'd me 'mid its greatest. Thus
 Have I seen leaping seaward, like great ships,
 Great hearts and lordly natures. I have seen,
 As I saw not before the sun went in,
 What is the ocean that they struggle with,
 And what the large eventment of the voyage !
 And, as I felt the freight, and saw the sea,
 I thought what was the vessel—and the port
 For which she set her compass and the helm.

XXXIX.

Well may I say I am not what I was.
 And well may all men say it. I know not
 That I bear better warrant for the land
 That lifts beyond this flood. I fear the seal

That bears the signet of admission there,
 May oft have taken but indignity
 In this sad passage. Yet the spirit here,
 As to my own unveil'd, has taken front,
 And given that illustration that no Power
 Save one can take and give.—I have look'd on
 Things as a school—and as but scholars, men—
 Receiving lessons now—now rendering,
 And acting, in strange mask and drapery,
 A part we reck not, till we have been told
 Life's but a drama-act—and this the stage !

XL.

And why this riddle ? I had ponder'd Man,
 Before I had the turf-spot he must fill.
 But not *so* ponder'd. There had been no thought
 About his Nature, as about the front
 He bore in Nature. Nothing of the march
 He might make on in victories of Mind,
 As of the sword he wielded—or the tone !
 I saw not that in him to make me still,
 As I now see it—I had follow'd him
 Oft in his various journeyings, fancy-led,
 Until my wilder'd spirit, pass'd within,
 Seem'd lost in lab'rinth of its questioning !

XLI.

Thus did I gaze upon him, ere I saw
 What Man had of that heirship to the home
 That angels walk—which, would he aye proclaim,
 As he might ever, with the voice and hand,
 Would make his fellows but a holy band,
 And the world Eden. It was ere I saw
 What he might reach to—that his better strength
 Was link'd with Virtue—and that Virtue yet
 Shone like a tower-light in him 'mid the night

And storm-rocks of his nature—that he yet
 Might claim the Mercy that was offered him—
 From founts, too, that 'twas glory large to win,
 Beyond all glory from all founts that Man
 Has open'd on his way to Fame—and Graves !
 But Man is not *alone*—nor stands alone
 In all these scenic mysteries we call
 From the great empirage within. Alone !
 It is a weary word—of weary sound,
 That has no echo. It gives back to him
 No answer, in its blank significance !

XLII.

How beautiful this thought, that sympathy
 Walks all creation's round ! How beautiful
 That soul, like all we see, is voic'd for soul,
 That is its echo—and that echo still
 Lives in one repetition, that fails not,
 Till Time dies in the vacuum of the tomb !
 How beautiful it is, that wander on
 Till his foot falters on the dim abyss
 That must receive him, there can never come
 The time when Man meets not response within
 Of *something* from its *somewhere* ! I can see
 The union that I feel, and hear confess'd,
 And every sense is wed to harmony !
 There is a marriage of all things create,
 And each still finds its likeness through the world !

XLIII.

Thus Man is not alone. For let him forth,
 As shrinking and as wearied as he will,
 To wander, cowl'd, the deserts and old isles,
 There yet will be an echo to his cry—
 Be it in jubilee—or moan—or prayer—
 He cannot 'scape the fellowship that comes

Of mem'ry, link'd so with a thousand days,
 That *will* be round us, in a thicker band,
 The more we would fly from them.—He cannot
 Forget the fount—the childhood—and the hearth—
 His home, and hills—the magic of his Love—
 His first, perhaps his only passion—Love
 That made him half the madman he has seem'd,
 Yet gave him all the light by which he trod !
 Affection *will* live with him. The young song
 That warbled on young lips, when all he spake
 Was passionate with music, and that song
 From *her* was answer to him every where,
 Will aye ring through that deeper ear within,
 And people all around him. It is writ
 That Woman shall illuminate his path—
 The vision of his footsteps—and the guide.
 Bloom will wait on her—and the leaves she flings
 As she glides onward, from her orient store,
 Will fall like garlands round his weary head,
 And scatter, like a radiance, at his feet !

XLIV.

True thoughts are born of Nature. Those that rise
 Within the spirit, when its only hope
 Is to turn inward to the wilderness
 Itself has made of its first glory—those
 Are not the *thoughts* that touch mortality,
 And make us question of another sphere—
 But reveries, that take no name of thought
 Nor wear the title—but the cloudy dreams
 That come to the dull dotard, in the dim
 And duller home of his inanity,
 As to a Socrates. Yes ! thoughts that now
 Rise round me from these battlements of hills—
 These vales, and waters, and these mountain crags
 Of the fierce eagle ! These are godlike thoughts

That Nature summons from the heights and depths
 Of the Divine within us.—I can see
 In yonder bird that circles over me,
 With his wide-sailing pens, and bended beak,
 And the upreaching glory of his glance,
 A type of the untaught imaginings
 That guide great natures, and lure on to spheres
 Where there come never clouds or gatherings
 To tell th' impureness of the element
 In which they form and fade. If we look up,
 Panting, with cleaving wing, for freer air,
 Strong in that lofty bearing, as we mount,
 That makes men honor, we've already won
 Half of the prize we strike for. We pass up,
 Like him of Tarsus, to the citadel
 Of the unearthly, when these earthly dreams
 Are flung back to the chaos gend'ring them,
 And the great freedom mantles us that robes
 The immortal captains of th' uncurtain'd climes
 That rose on Revelation!—I know not
 What braver could have broken on the eye
 Of him who enter'd at the golden gate,
 And walk'd the floor of pearl—and heard the voice
 Of the Archangel's trumpet, than will break
 On him that asks communion with the sky,
 'Mid all the magic of these mysteries
 That meet him on the mountains of the mind—
 High places of the spirit—and the mounts
 And valleys of the earth—alike—when both
 Are sought for in the garb of prayer and praise!
 There is a Revelation in the flower,
 As there is in the travel of the beam
 That gives it glory!—You may gaze on one
 With its uncounted perfumes, and read hues,
 Riv'ling its odors—and philosophy
 May faint upon its volume, 'mid that light

'Twould follow to the fountain, peering pale
 Out from the attic prison of its tower !
 And as you gaze, or swoon with wonder, yet
 There is a solace in th' o'ermastery,
 So it be on you from that presence, wide
 And 'whelming as Eternity, with which
 To interchange is glory—though we die
 In th' interchanging!—Neither is this all.

XLV.

There is a Revelation in the cell
 Of the o'erladen fly, whose wing cowers not
 Above the loftiest turrets of the hills,
 As there is in the castellated crown
 The architect has lifted from the crags
 In strength and beauty—so we follow there
 The bee or builder, where their genius tells
 Its complicated story to our gaze !

XLVI.

There is a Revelation in these Years.
 We feel it as they travel to their bourne,
 Leaving their various tribute as they pass—
 To-day in dullard lesson to the heart
 That yesterday was flatter'd like a king,
 And shall lie down to-morrow without pride,
 Or even pulse—to tell you what it was !
 This Revelation is a record, too,
 Made, if we will, or will not, on the page
 Of this existence, and in characters
 That take a deeper and a bolder line,
 As the blood thickens, and a fainter light
 Plays sentinel within the misty eye !
 For we see plainer of the heaven or hell
 For which we take departure, as the sense
 Grows sluggish in us, and *the future* fills

What was the area of *the present*, once,
 In that excluding riot of our days,
 When this *to have* laughs at the all *to come* !
 As we fold round the robes in which we pass
 Out of this scene we darken or adorn,
 Truth lights this Revelation of ourselves
 Unto ourselves, until we *see* the Power
 We had before but *heard of*—and the chain
 That links us with It, stretches from the sphere
 We cannot fathom, with the clearness then
 Of some hand-writing on the fading wall,
 Alike to the Belshazzars of this earth,
 And the mean slave that dies in solitude !
 If this be Revelation, such as he
 Beheld who wrote of it, to summon Man
 On to the land he enter'd—then 'tis ours
 To joy in it with shoutings ! It is ours,
 As in great duty, to give greater praise
 That such a veil is lifted on our years,
 Ere yet we call their numbers—that we see
 In childhood we may grasp divinity
 And from our cradles whisper with our God !

XLVII.

There are strong men who think that to be great
 As the world renders it, is but to win
 The places of its greatness—and its pomp—
 Those stations that aspire like monuments
 Out of this level of humanity,
 To which, at last, they bend them, with the grass.
 They dream that circumstance, and shouts, and crowns,
 Illustrate best that royalty 'tis best
 To toil for, to the draining of the blood
 And sacrifice of all that gives it course
 And healthiness along its channels ! All
 That may upbear them where the lights die not
 That 'lume the pathway and the palaces !

XLVIII.

What is it to be great? How vain to ask,
 With the eye fix'd on earth, while busy man
 Sweeps the broad surface, 'mid its ocean noise!
 Come hither, under the deep night, and stand
 Upon this tower, when the wide city sleeps,
 And a vast stillness broods upon the air;
 Then look above, where the bright band of stars
 Treads to its noble music, and the moon
 Rides on its silent wheel the unfathom'd sky—
 Look at the mighty sea—and hear the voice,
 The same it uttered when the world was made,
 And the great waters from the hand of God
 Were pour'd into its deeps.

These are the works
 That tell you what is Greatness—and oppress
 The spirit, as it reads it—these the lines
 That fade not, written on the wave and sky,
 In characters of light ineffable!

And who is GREAT? Alas—the teeming earth
 Has seen but ONE. The lowly Bethlehem
 Shadow'd his infant brow—the manger, there,
 Pillow'd his infant head. Yet who, like Him,
 Has come from palaces, and walk'd the land,
 With such a crown upon his golden hair?
 Is Greatness from the glory of our sires?
 Or the emblazon'd page of heraldry—
His Father was the God all the earth;
His generation from Eternity!
 Is it from Life—or life's great deeds, that stir
 The heart to admiration—prayers—and tears?
His was a Life devoted to the world—
 A *Life* that battled with eternal *Death*.
 Is it from Glory? *His* was that of good—

Not marshall'd by the clarion and the trump,
 But by the silent Gratitude of Earth.
 Is it from Eloquence? *His* wondrous lips
 Stir'd the great elements—and mount and sea
 Trembled before his words—and wind and storm
 Sank at that magic utterance—" *Be still.*"
 He spake—and thrones before his startling voice,
 And kings who fill'd them, in their robes and crowns,
 Shook like an aspen in the coming storm.
 Is it from Power? *His* sceptre was o'er all.
 And the wide world bow'd to his lifted hand.
 Is it from lofty Love—that love for Man,
 That dares the tempest of a madden'd earth—
 'The malediction of the human heart,
 For which it bows it to the sepulchre?
His was the great philanthropy of God!
 Alone He trod the wine-press—and alone,
 In red Gethsemane He bow'd and bled
 Great drops of agony—and cleans'd the world!

Then go—Earth knows no Greatness but the Soul's;
 No Great one but the Good; and when ye ask
 Who bore the noblest front of royalty,
 And who the noblest crown—I tell you HE,
 Whose brow was first unveil'd in Bethlehem,
 And veil'd at last, in thorns, on Calvary!

XLIX.

Yet are there men who tell you to be great,
 Is to be echoed so from land to land—
 To sweep them with loud armies—or to lead
 Trains of whole empires in idolatry.
 To be alone, from very solitude
 Born of that very worship—pray'd for, once,
 But now endur'd—the loneliness of power!
 Yet such are strong men—as the world writes strength

On brows of thousands it has set on thrones,
 And will still set them, while the better helm
 That Christian blazon'd through his Pilgrim fields,
 Is held so lesser than the coronet
 Of idols and red conquerors. His was strength,
 And his the greatness of an heir to realms,
 Where Virtue is the sun that centres them,
 And Angels are the pinion'd messengers!

L.

But mine may seem an idle spirit tale,
 Busied but with the shadows of the Mind,
 Nor ever startling with the histories
 Of things mysterious, but palpable,
 With which we pass the mirror of the world!
 So would I have it. There are tales of Men
 That cannot make them better—and but dark
 The roadside and the distance of their days.
 They teach them nothing of the phantasy
 They picture out, and follow—nor give line
 Of the immortal part they *can* so fill
 As to hold ages silent with the awe
 That spirit feels for spirit.—I would have
Mind seen, and not *events*. Its *making-known*—
 Not what it *makes*, to fill the sickly page
 Of readers who should walk but hospitals,
 And live, as they will die, in weary cells.
 What is the lesson that we give these wings
 To flit the earth with, or to pass to tombs
 That shadow'd their expansion! It is writ
 In language that shall dim our memories
 When we have gone to judgment with the things
 We thought to make the creatures we despis'd
 By our earth-born philosophy—by tales
 That have no scenery beyond the clouds,
 And know no future that is not to-day!

LI.

So let mine *be* that shaded history
 Of Mind, as something fashion'd for far spheres,
 Which this but stands the type to. I can feel
 I am a better claimant to great crowns
 And the strong welcomings that wait the brave,
 While I can hear this witness from within,
 That I have led *one* upward by my strain,
 Or pointed on my pathway, through my song,
 Than if I had come in with victories
 O'ershad'wing me like garlands—and with ranks
 And troops about me, giving me to praise,
 As men do conquerors, when they return
 With their swords wet, to tell their battle tales.

LII.

A sound went upward upon startled ears,
 Like music of some mighty instrument,
 Of that commanding and great harmony
 'That takes the spirit captive. From the sky,
 A voice broke o'er the mountain and the vale,
 And rushing river with its castled crag,
 'Telling, as though a prophet's stirring trump,
 'That the Mid Sea, which lash'd the Holy Shore,
 Should to its grave go back*—and a great path
 Open for chariots o'er its vanish'd tides—
 'The jewels of the ocean, from their caves,
 Flash to a wond'ring world—and the vast deep
 Bare its unnumber'd mysteries to man!
 A nation woke. Along the shadowy Rhine,

* In the year 1212, as we learn from an Italian antiquary, a general belief prevailed in Germany, that the Mediterranean Sea was to be dried up, that believers might pass to Jerusalem on foot. Italy was crowded with thousands of German pilgrims.—*Walpole*.

As though another 'Star' upon the air,
 With its unmaster'd glory, had come forth,
 Men startled as from slumber—and away
 They gather'd to the Capitol—and Rome
 Grew dark with pilgrims—and all Italy
 Was crowded with believers—and they stood,
 Pressing the classic shores—with rounding eyes,
 Gazing upon the quivering expanse,
 With its unalter'd blue—and the dull dirge
 Of its unshrinking waters. Still they gaz'd,
 With that sad fixedness of spirits bow'd,
 Which reft hearts only token. Still away
 To the lost Land—the sainted Sepulchre—
 They gaz'd, with eyes though tearless, yet how full!
 They gaz'd—but the sea fell not—not a wave
 Sunk from its royalty—but on, and far,
 Deep calling unto deep, it swung and swept,
 Unrein'd, from shore to shore?

LIII.

And such was Faith
 When men stood round its altars, as if Death
 Master'd the Life within them. Such was Faith,
 When Knowledge was as Darkness—and the stars
 Were reckon'd to hold nightly courtesy
 With Men whose souls were graceless as their beards.
 Was this the Faith that should move mountains! This
 That confidence in Him that pil'd them there
 Against the sky and clouds, which spurns them both,
 When Earth compares with Heaven!—Yet who shall tell
 Of the "dark ages," when men walk'd in cowl,
 And grop'd the earth with lanterns! Who shall tell
 When the day-star came up—and prophecy
 Turn'd to tread backward—craven, to its cell!
 Who shall make rightly record of that time,

And point it to his children, as white years
 Were mark'd by Roman fathers! Who shall tell
 When Man *began* his freedom—and gave wing
 Into that subtler element, where chains
 Find nothing they may link with or corrode.
 There are still prophets—and the preacher yet
 May rave of withering waters—and old deeps,
 Bar'd to their black foundations—and gold roofs
 Of a new tower'd Jerusalem. There are still
 How many bosoms bursting with the song
 Of Miracle, that not the melody
 Of all the harping Psalms could touch to praise!
 How many that will clutch the pilgrim staff,
 But curse the withering barrens of the way!
 How many who pass misery in scorn,
 Yet give their last hosannas to a dream!
 How many, whose loud faith would spurn their graves,
 Who yet, unsprinkled, would not dare to die!

LIV.

But the night gathers—and my damping string
 Is passing from its tension, and its tune.
 The chords well weary on upbraiding ears,
 And the harp wails for silence, and repose.
 And they shall come. For 'tis as these years
 Feel Life's departing Music—so my song,
 Fall'n from the melody that stirr'd its founts,
 Feels it grow fainter. Yet I would not change
 The cadence for the chorus. And though young,
 Yet have I heard such voices on my way,
 As I would not exchange for revelry
 Of fairy music—though those voices seem'd
 Born of the black-wing'd choir of dissonance—
 The stricken sisters of a pallid band,
 To whom there's punishment in harmony.



The cadence of those tones has sorrow'd me—
But never wearied.—It has taught me more
By the chromatic mourning of its fall,
Than I had gather'd from an age of sound,
Tearing its way triumphant, in the swell
Of a constructed chorus!—It has taught
That Man must come to silence—though the storm
Of a world's worship have been round his head
Since it could bear a crown. And that his years
Are but the pages in a calendar,
He fills, himself, with wonder or with shame.

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